

I had recourse to some of our dictionaries, to find out what popular lexicographers said about it. I referred to the standard works of several different nations, which I find to be as follows—

Webster (American), “Religion includes a belief in the revelation of his (God’s) will to man, and in man’s obligation to obey his command.”

Worcester (a prominent American). “1. An acknowledgement of our obligation to God as our creator. 2. A particular system of faith or worship. We speak of the Greek, Hindoo, Jewish, Christian, and Mahomedan religion.”

Johnson (English), “Religion, a system of faith and worship.”

Dictionary of the French Academy, “La croyance que l’on a de la divinite’ et le culte qu’on lue rend en consequence.”

Foi croyance.

The belief we have in God and his worship.

Faith—belief.

German Dictionary of Wurterbuch, by Dr. N. N. W. Meissner, a standard work in Germany.

“Religion, glaube, faith, persuasion.”

Here, then we have the opinion of four of the great leading nations of the earth, as expressed by their acknowledged standard works, on what they consider to be the meaning of the word religion.

The German has it—faith, persuasion. The French—faith, belief; faith in God and his worship. The English—a system of faith and worship. These three are very similar.

Next we have Webster, American, which is our acknowledged standard, and he says, “Religion includes a belief in the revelations of God’s will to man, and in man’s obligation to obey his commands.”

This is, indeed, very pointed; and if this definition be correct, it would

necessarily lead us to inquire, as did Paul of old. “Whether it is better to obey man or God, judge ye.”

Worcester, another prominent American lexicographer, speaks of “Religion as an acknowledgement of God as our creator, and a particular system of faith or worship.” Here he agrees with the French, German, and English. He then quotes from a prominent work—“We speak of the Greek, Hindoo, Jewish, Christian, and Mahomedan religions.” He might very properly have added Mormon.

Faith, belief, and worship seem to be the prominent idea advanced, with the addition of our popular lexicographer Walker, who adds to the faith in God, that it must be in the revelations of His will to man, and in man’s obligations to obey His commands.

Having now found out what the meaning of religion is, we shall be the better prepared to inquire whether a plurality of wives, or, as it is sometimes called, polygamy, is a part of our religious faith or not.

The Constitution of the United States says that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” I have thought of the law which Congress has made in relation to polygamy. The question, however, necessarily arises, is it constitutional for Congress to interfere with religious matters—with the establishment of religion, or the free exercise thereof? The Constitution says no. Then is polygamy a religious question or is it not? Is it a marriage ceremony or is it not? Marriage is received by the Greek church as a solemn sacrament of the church; the Roman Catholic church and the Church of England also admit marriage to be a religious sacrament; and so it is admitted by the great mass of religious sects now in the world. These are facts that need no proof; everybody is acquainted with